

Testimony of William Deming
Before The Labor and Public Employees Committee

987

OPPOSING

SB-987, An Act Requiring Community Workforce Agreements for Construction Projects at the Connecticut State University System

March 1, 2011

My name is Billy Deming and I am a licensed E2 electrician employed by Horton Electric, located in Canton. I recently passed my E2 test after completing the 4 years of training required by the state of Connecticut. I work very hard and put in a full days work everyday.

Unfortunately, as proposed, SB-987 would prevent Horton Electric from bidding these Connecticut State University System projects. Therefore, I cannot support SB-987 or any similar legislation.

SB-987 would require that all construction workers on the job, including electricians, come from the union halls. Since I am employed by an open shop employer, I would not be welcome on this publicly funded project. In addition, the bill mandates compliance with union jurisdiction rules, which don't lend themselves to productivity or a team oriented approach to project completion. Our management would not know how to bid the project under the restrictive and antiquated rules.

As Connecticut's economy is limping to recover, I would encourage the Committee to review and reject the hurdles that SB-987 would impose on the state's commercial construction industry. SB-987 states that a community workforce agreement would be required for any construction contract at the Connecticut State University System. An agreement with a labor organization is not a solution for contractors or the state's struggling economy. The real remedy is a level bidding field where all contractors have the opportunity to bid, especially on publicly funded projects paid by state taxpayers and all employees are highly paid under Connecticut's prevailing wage laws.

I would like to point out that Connecticut has a well trained and highly skilled workforce. Connecticut leads the nation when it comes to requiring licenses for various construction trades, requiring a total of 6 licenses, for installation of HVAC, plumbing, electrical, sheet metal, fire sprinkler, and glass. In addition, the state Department of Administrative Services has in place a rigorous bidding process in which contractors must be 'pre-qualified' before bidding on a publicly-funded state project. This process involves bonding capacity, transparency for political donations, previous work experience, and the pre-qualification process makes it virtually impossible to have a contract awarded to a contractor without due diligence.

The so-called Community Workforce Agreement would be a government-mandated, anti-competitive arrangement that is unnecessary as they are costly and counterproductive. They detour open, fair and competitive bidding on public works projects. Such agreements would drive up the cost of construction by reducing competition and effectively excluding merit shop contractors and their skilled employees from building projects paid for by their own tax dollars. This would be a terrible misuse of taxpayer money as Connecticut struggles to overcome a \$3.7 billion deficit.

SB-987 should not move forward. It would squash the much needed opportunities and competition for creating jobs as the majority of the construction industry would be unable to meet the unfair bid requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and on behalf of the electrical industry, I urge the Committee to oppose SB-987.